

Refuge in the Shadow of Thy Wings

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Bible Text: Psalm 57:1
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We read from the word of God from a couple of passages this morning. The first one is found in 1 Samuel 23 and 24. 1 Samuel 23 and 24. A couple of verses out of chapter 23 starting at verse 13. 1 Samuel 23, starting at 13.

13 Then David and his men, which were about six hundred, arose and departed out of Keilah, and went whithersoever they could go. And it was told Saul that David was escaped from Keilah; and he forbore to go forth. 14 And David abode in the wilderness in strong holds, and remained in a mountain in the wilderness of Ziph. And Saul sought him every day, but God delivered him not into his hand. 15 And David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life: and David was in the wilderness of Ziph in a wood.

Now let's go to chapter 24.

1 And it came to pass, when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him, saying, Behold, David is in the wilderness of Engedi. 2 Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. 3 And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave; and Saul went in to cover his feet: and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. 4 And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. 5 And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. 6 And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD. 7 So David stayed his servants with these words, and suffered them not to rise against Saul. But Saul rose up out of the cave, and went on his way. 8 David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself. 9 And David said to Saul, Wherefore

hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt? 10 Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed. 11 Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it. 12 The LORD judge between me and thee, and the LORD avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 13 As saith the proverb of the ancients, Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked: but mine hand shall not be upon thee. 14 After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea. 15 The LORD therefore be judge, and judge between me and thee, and see, and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thine hand. 16 And it came to pass, when David had made an end of speaking these words unto Saul, that Saul said, Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul lifted up his voice, and wept. 17 And he said to David, Thou art more righteous than I: for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil. 18 And thou hast shewed this day how that thou hast dealt well with me: forasmuch as when the LORD had delivered me into thine hand, thou killedst me not. 19 For if a man find his enemy, will he let him go well away? wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day. 20 And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand. 21 Swear now therefore unto me by the LORD, that thou wilt not cut off my seed after me, and that thou wilt not destroy my name out of my father's house. 22 And David sware unto Saul. And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold.

And now we read Psalm 57. Psalm 57 in what is now in our English versions a superscription but in the Hebrew Bible is the first verse of the Psalm. We read,

1 [To the chief Musician, Altaschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.] Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. 2 I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. 3 He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. 4 My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword. 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. 6 They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves. 7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and

give praise. 8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. 9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. 10 For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. 11 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth.

May God bless our reading of his word.

Our text this morning is that first verse, Psalm 57:1,

1 Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.

When David makes a double plea in that for mercy in this first verse, it indicates the high level of his anxiety and his fears, his apprehensions. David, notice, bases his plea for mercy on the fact that he trusts Jehovah, and the reason is because trust in God elicits bold prayers for mercy. Trust in God elicits prayers for mercy. And having committed himself to God, to his care, he then experiences the consciousness that all is well. He's safe under the shadow of God's wings. If you read this Psalm repeatedly three or four times, then you come easily to the consciousness that he begins with the experience of some troubles and fears and some misery, but he concludes with praise to God, and we do this sermon with the prayer that that's what God will work for us and in us this morning.

David experienced calamities. It's interesting that the word "calamities" has its root in the Hebrew in the word "a gulf or a chasm," and gulf or a chasm that it's physically impossible to go over or pass through, and if you strive to do that, you will not be able to survive. It will be certain ruin. David shows in this Psalm that he is experiencing the trouble that we read of in 1 Samuel. He declares that there are those who follow him in verse 3, whose desire is to swallow him up. Then in verse 4, he speaks of lions, and then again in verse 6, he speaks of those who set a net at his feet to entrap him. So David had 600, Saul had 3,000 chosen men who are pursuing him.

David speaks of "these calamities," and then again we see what we read in that history in 1 Samuel. Saul knew that David was anointed to be king as chapter 23 indicates, and he wanted to prevent that as much as he could possibly do it, so he spent all of his time in pursuit of David. The only time he didn't is when the Philistines threatened the nation, then he went after them, but he went back right away to trying to find David in order to kill him.

Then there's this incident that Saul in his pursuit wants to find some rest and he goes into the mouth of a cave and he lays himself down and goes to sleep, and David and his 600 men are in the depths of that cave. David was that close to being able to deliver himself of his enemy. And if we want to learn anything, then that attitude of David toward Jehovah's anointed, here he was anointed by Samuel, he was righteous, God declared through Samuel that God saw his heart, he saw the outside, the stature of his older

brothers but he saw David's heart. And Saul is the epitome of wickedness. Saul had tried to kill him when he was playing his harp to relieve him of his depression. Saul was wicked but he was, in David's mind, Jehovah's anointed and he was going to respect that anointing that Jehovah gave to him, and even though he deserved to be punished, David wasn't going to do it. He was going to let the Lord do it in God's, in his time.

Well, calamities. What makes this special service the way it is, is because of a high level of consciousness of a calamity, the coronavirus, something that has brought about such fear within not only our nation, our estate and our world, but it affects the economy, it affects supplies in stores, it affects the sport world, it closes schools, and it closes worship services. But we also know other calamities, and of late we've in the last year, we've seen deaths in the congregation, maybe of those that are aged, but we've also seen in the Shemill's strokes and heart diseases, we hear of cancers that Mr. Heizinger has, we hear of all kinds of other issues that are going on. Increasing lawlessness in this world. We know of church controversies, calamities. Galatians 1 describes this world as a present evil world that's growing in sinfulness and the openness with which sin is displayed. How are we to respond? It is not uncommon for people with grandchildren to say will they be able to endure. The way in which the coronavirus not just affects the state but the world shows how the world is becoming united in its economy and in its fears.

Do we despair in the face of those who are seeking to destroy us? Do we despair and become frustrated and afraid? Do we become crushed with worry and oppression? Do we find our hope in the vain words of politicians who want to be President? Or do we go to the other extreme and foolishly close our eyes to realities and speak of happiness when there is none?

Well, the Psalmist in the very first verse shows us how God inspired him to respond to the experience of calamities. He's gonna trust in Jehovah. Calamities are God-given opportunities, God-given for us to exercise a faith, a faith that God has already given to us, that puts its trust in him. Our God-given faith makes us see that not fate, not chance carries the virus, but God, not only is he a God who is in control, sovereign control, that's the beauty of those expressions that we used at the very beginning. Our help is in the name of Jehovah who made heaven and earth. The fact that God made the heavens and the earth is that which draws our attention to him who out of nothing made everything, but also upholds it by the same word of his power, upholds it all, controls it. No chance, no fate, God is at work in the movement of that tiniest infectious virus. We can wash our hands all we want and he can bring it to us. God is in control.

Now secondly, this God is our God. Again, the 10 Commandments, how many times doesn't he tell us that that's the relationship that he has with us? So this sovereign Lord over all calamities is, as Jesus taught us to pray, our Father. He cares. He cares for us in such a rich and powerful and tender way. So the picture that he draws in this Psalm at the very beginning is, "in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge."

It happened last night that "Planet Earth" was on, nothing else to look at, and it showed an ostrich pair with their real little ones having to walk through the desert under the heat

of the sun a great distance looking for water, and that there were times as they walked that the father opened up his wings and all the little chicks would hover in the shadow of their wings, the father's wings. Farmers will tell of how when there's a hawk, that the hen will spread out its wings and all the little chicks will gather underneath it. Other farmers who have experienced fires will find the carcass of a chicken, a hen, and they lift it up and its dead but underneath it are the little chicks still alive. He uses that picture to describe the kind of refuge that Jehovah is because of his relationship to us.

What's further interesting is that the word "trust, my soul trusteth in thee," is the very same Hebrew word that in the last part of the verse is translated "refuge" Refuge and trust are the same. "My soul trusteth in thee." This refuge is God-given but the refuge is our trust. Our trust in God is our refuge. That's the wings. So when God gives us faith, in faith one holds for truth everything God has revealed in his word, but secondly is an assured confidence about his relationship to us, and that's the refuge. We don't have to find a place, we don't have to go somewhere, we have to see that God has gifted us with a faith that trusts him and that's our refuge.

A couple of weeks ago we referenced Hebrews 11 where Moses is said to have left all the riches of Egypt that he could see because he put his confidence in what he couldn't see. He could see the unseen one, he could see the unseen one's unseen promises of care, so we see by faith the reality of our God's relationship to us. What's his relationship? His relationship is described in the word "mercy" in our text. There's other places where he's described in other ways but in our text it's mercy. That's an interesting concept. We're going to trust in the mercy of Jehovah. We're going to trust in the attitude that God has toward us. What is that attitude? That attitude of God towards his people is an attitude of a deep-felt desire, fervency to bless the miserable.

To help me remember, I always think MM, mercy is for the miserable. When we cry for mercy, we know that we're not in a position to deserve it. We don't earn it. We can't. So blind Bartimaeus, "Have mercy, thou Son of David!" And he cried the louder, "Have mercy!" David, "Be merciful unto me, O God, thou sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, that being who is every perfection! Have mercy!" And then again, "Have mercy!" and it's as if he cried louder and his confidence is he trusts him, so his confidence is he has a mercy, look at verse 10, "thy mercy is unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds." And remember that the word "truth" is sometimes translated correctly "faithfulness." "Thy mercy is unto the heavens and thy faithfulness unto the clouds." Now you take mercy and mercy is that blessing that God gives moment after moment after moment, mercy, mercy, mercy, mercy, and you put mercy together, all those mercies together and you have faithfulness.

"And thy mercy is to the heavens and thy truth unto the clouds, thy faithfulness." Morning by morning, new mercies. We wake up completely oblivious to God's care. We wake up and we become conscious as we look up to him, his mercy is still give to us, it's still there, here it comes again, and it's as if it's fresh every time, and we take all of those mercies and we say, "Great is thy faithfulness. Thy truth." So when we plead for mercy, it's for this moment and we multiply those moments and we see his faithfulness.

So it's in God that we trust. Take out an American coin, not in the coin but in God we trust. "My soul trusteth in thee. Under the shadow of thy wings will I trust. Have mercy." And that knowledge and that trust in him is that we know that every calamity is an instrument in his hands, a God-given opportunity for us to feel his work on us, conforming us increasingly by our responses, by our correct responses to the image of his Son. When we respond with trust, then we do what Jesus did, what his Son did, and thus we show more and more we are like his Son, children of God our Father.

David adds another thought. First there's trust in Jehovah but he adds also this thought in the second place, that God's work on us is usually not forever. Sometimes the pain seems to go on and on and on. Sometimes it's not one issue and then that one's over and there's another one, and then there's another one, and it seems like sometimes we go through all sorts of trials and we wonder will it ever end, but David says and he teaches us, "until these calamities be overpast," or pass over, pass away, be taken away. Those are all possibly translations of that word "overpast." When at the moment there he is in the depths of this cave, and here comes Saul and he wonders how far is he going to go into the cave, and he's going to bring his 6,000 chosen soldiers to come in or set fire to the mouth and destroy them inside, or pull down some rocks and close it up and let them starve to death. That moment may seem dark and very frightening but God wants us to observe that there are times when these things, these calamities will pass away what at the moment seem to be so dark, dead end, David's night had an end, and David's soul didn't always remain among the lions for the rest of his life. He came out of that cave and David knew that he would not die because God had anointed him to be the king of Israel.

So our calamities also must be viewed as temporary in two senses. That great black plague of the Middle Ages that took half of the population of Europe, it passed. The anthrax scare of 2001 passed. The West Nile virus of 2002 passed. The fear of SARS in 2003 passed. The bird flu of 2005 passed. The ecoli scare of 2006 passed. The financial collapse of 2008-9 passed. The 2009 fear of swine flu passed. The coronavirus will pass. But what if I die before it passes? Oh, that's another way it will pass. And when it passes, there's always gonna be another because as we live in this present evil world of sin and its misery will always be here, and the deliverance from all of the afflictions of this life are gonna be when we pass from this life.

So what are the lessons that we are to learn? First, never forget that David is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ and to help us understand this passage, we must see David as a type of Christ who suffered calamities untold. He suffered at the hands of men, but he especially suffered at the hands of God because his atoning sufferings were unspeakable in their greatness. The dark cloud of divine wrath on our sin burst upon him especially in the three hours of darkness on the cross. Realize that what David did, I'm sorry what Jesus did in the face of all of his sufferings is what David is doing. In Hebrews 5:7, we read this about Jesus, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death," he cried for mercy. Jesus cried for mercy, in the days of his flesh when he suffered, he offered up prayers.

Sufferings, calamities are occasions for us to pray. Jesus did that, but in his resurrection, Jesus showed that his calamities were ended and Jesus experienced an end of them, they were dispelled. His resurrection is a solid ground for us to know that our calamities will not destroy us but are instruments that God uses, one, to make us look at him, but two, it might be able to bring us right to the face and the throne of God. We might be delivered from all troubles and trials.

It crushes and it destroys unbelievers, so this coronavirus fear are the footsteps that we must hear of Jesus' coming. He said when he left, "I'm still coming," and that's why we can talk about his first coming and his second coming, the Bible does, uses that expression, but we should look at it as his first appearance and then he's gone but he's still coming, he's still coming and then there is his second appearance, and that's the final revelation of his coming. So in the old dispensation they were looking for him to come. Well, he is coming. He didn't stop coming. And as the coronavirus sets a fear to the whole world, we see the unification of this world that will enable antichrist to have dominion over the whole world against the church, and when the governor both in 1918 and now can say no more assemblages larger than 250, when's the next step? We see it coming, our eyes are open. We hear not the governor's power or antichrist power, we hear Jesus, our Savior, executing his will, performing his good pleasure in order to save unto himself his people but it's also the occasion for the ungodly to fill their cup of iniquity.

Death may be deliverance and death, about death we must think soberly. That's why when old or young die, those are opportunities for us to reflect on death. It is called a last enemy. It's an enemy. It's the last one for each one, but it is an enemy. But also because it's the last one, it's the door. That's only how long it lasts, just a little doorway into eternal glory and bliss that brings us to the throne of Christ. We don't have to be afraid of it, but also we must not in rash pride dismiss it as if it's no concern. Our Father is doing all things well. Every virus is his servant, and underneath, Deuteronomy 33:27, are his everlasting arms, and over us are his wings.

These calamities, this coronavirus, for us is not a punishment. It is for the ungodly, the unbelieving, but not for us. It's the means that God is using to refine us, to take away some of the dross of unbelief and to increase the frequency of our exercise of faith. Chastening brings to believers the assurance of his mercy, of his blessing, of his love, and feel his hand molding me to become more like his Son. That's why Hebrews 12 quoting from Proverbs 3, "Don't despise the chastening of the Lord, but nor ought it to be an occasion for us to lose heart, nor faint when we're rebuked by him but be assured whom he loves, he chastens."

And that's why he wants us to finish this way, "My heart is fixed." I've got to say it again, "My heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise. Awake, my glory, awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awaken early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations." Let the world know where our confidence lies. "For thy

mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: let thy glory be above all the earth." Amen.

Apply thou thy word, great and glorious Father, as only thy Spirit is able. We speak it, we speak it with febleness and weakness, but weakest means fulfill thy will. So now carry that word to our understanding and to our lives so that we may increase in our faith and our hope in thee. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Psalm 57:1
REFUGE IN THE SHADOW OF THY WINGS

- I. The calamities.
 - A. "Calamities" are chasms (fig. of destruction), engulfing ruin, destruction, calamity, which occasion fear and anguish.
 - B. David speaks of "these" calamities. The psalm's superscription speaks of the time when David is in a cave (I Sam. 24:3).
 - C. We too know calamities: the present crisis of the coronavirus pandemic, etc.
 - D. Shall we despair with grief and anxiousness under the load of calamities?
- II. My refuge is under the shadow of God's wings.
 - A. The figure is that of little chicks who, in the face of danger, run for protection under their mother's wings.
 - 1. With our God-given faith we see Jehovah as our God.
 - 2. Under the wings of God's blessed relationship with us, we find a safe retreat.
 - B. These calamities shall "be overpast," i.e., pass by or bring, carry, do away, take, take away
 - 1. What at the moment seemed so dark for David ended and went away. David's night had an end in time.
 - 2. So our present calamities will pass over.
- III. The lessons.
 - A. To help us understand we must see David as a type of King Jesus who suffered both at God's hand and at man's hand.
 - 1. Jesus's atoning sufferings were unspeakable, the dark cloud of divine wrath on sin, which burst over Him on the cross.
 - 2. In His resurrection the cloud of His calamities was dispelled forever.
 - B. This virus and all such are the footsteps of our returning Lord, and we can look up in hope for our redemption draws nigh.
 - C. Also we must think of the calamities which befall us in this life, not as punishments for sin, but as the means God uses to burn away the dross of our unbelief and to increase our faith (Heb. 12:5,6 from Prov. 3:11,12).